THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government of Maharashtra, on the basis of a Resolution passed unanimously by both Houses of the State Legislature on 13.7.2006, has requested Government of India to take necessary steps to amend Article 371(2) of the Constitution to set up a separate Statutory Development Board for North Maharashtra covering the five districts of Dhule, Nandurbar, Jalgaon, Nasik and Ahmednagar.

(c) The proposal is under examination.

Separate Statutory Development Board for Konkan

3167. SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any proposal to amend Article 371 (2) (a) to set up Separate Statutory Development Board for Konkan in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Government has received a Resolution passed on 20th February, 2005 by both the Houses of Maharashtra State Legislature recommending the establishment of a separate Development Board for Konkan region of the State. The Planning Commission, who were consulted in the matter, are of the view that backwardness by itself is not a reason for constitutional amendment as there are other instruments available to the Centre and State Governments to gear up their development machinery.

(c) Does not arise.

Intelligence report about prevalence of naxalism in Punjab

3168. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:
SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Intelligence agencies in Punjab has sent a report to Government about prevalence of naxalism in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government proposes to take any firm steps to check the spread of naxalism in Punjab; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) to (d) It may not be feasible or appropriate for Ministry of Home Affairs to comment on the Inputs provided from time to time by the Central and State Intelligence agencies.

No incident of naxalite violence or casualty of civillans or security personnel has been reported from Punjab during the last five years.

Maintenance of law and order lies primarily in the domain of the concerned State Governments. The Central Government also closely monitors the situation and provides assistance by various means to the concerned State Governments.

Scheme for protection of witnesses

3169. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to enforce any scheme for the protection of witnesses; and

(b) if so, the details of essential features of the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI V. RADHIKA SELVI): (a) The Law Commission of India in its 198th Report on 'Witness Identity Protection and Witness Protection Programmes' has suggested comprehensive review of witness protection. Since, the Criminal Law and the Criminal Procedure are on the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India this requires consultation with State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. The Report has been referred to all the State Government and Union Territory Administration for their comments/views. No time frame can be fixed in this regard.

(b) Witness Protection Programmes refer to witness protection outside the Court. At the instance of the public prosecutor, the witness can be given a new identity by a Magistrate after conducting an *exparte* inquiry in his chambers. In a case of likelihood of danger to his life, he is given a different identity and may, if need be, even relocated in different place along with his depandants till the trial of the case against the accused is completed. The expenses for maintenance of all the persons must be met by the State Legal Aid Authority through the District Legal Aid Authority. The witness has to sign an MoU which will list out the obligations of the State as well the witness. Being admitted to the programme, the witness has an obligation to depose and the State has an obligation to protect him physically outside Court. Breach of MoU by the witness will result in his being taken out of the programme.

Rise in naxalite activities

†3170. SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that naxalite activities have been increasing in the country for the last few years;

(b) if so, the number of districts identified in naxal affected States in April, 2004;

(c) the number of such States and districts during December, 2007 alongwith their names; and

(d) the reasons for this rapid increase in the naxalite activities?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi